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THE NORTH-WEST EDUCATION QUESTION

The Compromise Reached by the Government.

An Efficient Public School System for the
New Provinces.

SPEECH OF HON. W. S. FIELDING, MINISTER OF FINANCE,
HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, MARCH 24, 1905.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). Mr. Speaker, I do not quite understand the procedure under which my hon. friend the leader of the opposition has proposed this amendment, and, so far as I do understand it, I do not agree with him as to the effect which it may have upon the measure that is now before the House. The motion now before the House is that this Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN, 'Be now read.'

Mr. FIELDING. That is the motion which has been placed in your hands. The motion is that this Bill be read a second time. My hon. friend moves to strike out all the words after 'that,' and express a pious opinion on one portion of the Bill. It seems to me that after you have struck out all the words of the motion that the Bill be now read a second time, there is no Bill left. It is certainly not the usual method whereby anybody moves an amendment. If an hon. member regards the main purpose of a Bill—whatever he may be pleased to consider its main purpose—with favour and disapproves of some minor part of it, his obvious duty is to support the second reading of that Bill, and when in committee we reach the clause to which he objects, then is the proper moment to move that that clause be struck out and something else be substituted. I think the method of my hon. friend is a mistaken one; however, I do not attach much importance to that, and I prefer to proceed with the discussion.

The Constitutional Question.

I need hardly say, Sir, that I do not rise for the purpose of following my hon. friend in the very lengthy argument he has addressed to this House on what he is pleased to regard as the constitutional questions involved in the consideration of this measure. If I felt, as he appears to feel, that the constitutional questions involved are the overshadowing questions, I need hardly say that I would not presume to address the House at this moment, but I would leave the question to be dealt with by hon. members of the legal profession, who are supposed to understand such matters better than those of us who are laymen. But it is because I do not agree with my hon. friend that the constitutional question is the overshadowing question that I venture to discuss the matter at the present stage. I do not believe that the people of Canada will consent that any one of us shall shelter himself behind the fence of an alleged constitutional question. This school question is a vexed question, a troublesome question. We can all say with the fullest sincerity that it is a misfortune that we have to deal with it. But since we have it here, my belief is that our constituents, the people of Canada, will expect us not to evade it, but to meet it fairly, boldly, to discuss it openly, discuss it in a generous spirit and endeavor to find some solution of the difficult problem. I do not agree with my hon. friend that we are not called upon to discuss the question

of separate schools or common schools. I believe that the people of the Dominion to-day are not occupying their minds with an elaborate analysis of constitutional questions which nine out of ten of them will never read, and which the whole ten will fail to understand. I believe that the people of Canada, since this unpleasant question is brought before us will expect us to meet it plainly and openly and discuss it with the hope of finding a happy solution. So I put aside the constitutional question, not for a moment undervaluing it—

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The right hon. Prime Minister did not put it aside.

Mr. FIELDING. The Prime Minister did not discuss it in the sense that was attributed to him by the hon. gentleman.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

More Important Than the Constitutional Question.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not propose to go into that constitutional question, not because I say it should not receive any consideration, but because I say it is not the great question involved, and I refer to go on and deal with the practical questions which are before us. If it is a constitutional question above all others, then, perhaps the best thing we can do will be to request the legal members of this House to adjourn to the Railway Committee room and thresh it out, while we who have not the good fortune to belong to that learned profession will stay down here, and discuss the practical questions involved, or proceed with the ordinary business of the House. But, if it is the case that there are questions other than the constitutional question involved, these are the matters that I may venture to proceed to discuss before this House. Now, the first question to be considered, only for a moment, because happily, there is no division of opinion upon it, is whether or not the time has come when we shall give a provincial constitution to these new Territories in the West. Happily, I say, there is no difference of opinion on that. It is now thirty-five years since these lands were acquired and brought under the control of the Canadian authorities. From the beginning, governments and legislatures have gone on preparing the people for the work of self-government. At an early stage the province of Manitoba was carved out and set up in housekeeping. At a later stage the Northwest Territories were given another form of organization. That form was developed from time to time and at this moment they have in the Northwest Territories a very considerable measure of self-government, but inasmuch as it falls short of the ordinary powers, privileges and authority of a province, we all agree that the time has come when we shall give a provincial constitution to the people who inhabit those lands.

One or Two Provinces.

Then, we come to the question whether these Territories shall come under the operation of one government, as at present, or whether they shall be divided into two or more provinces. There is not much dispute on that point, happily. I think my hon. friend the leader of the opposition had previously entertained the view that one province was sufficient.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I never expressed any opinion on the subject.

Mr. FIELDING. I think some opinions have come from the other side of the House on that point. However, I am not saying that for the purpose of arguing it but I am only mentioning it incidentally. When we consider the question of the population of the Northwest Territories today we can readily agree that that population is not too much for one province. The population in the Territories to-day is about the same as the population of one of our smaller provinces, or of the greatest of the maritime provinces. But, we are well aware of the fact that the population of the Territories will increase very rapidly, and inasmuch as there is a vast area of land to be occupied it has been deemed wise to divide the Territories into two portions and establish a separate government for each. There may be some difference of opinion on that point, but it is not a very serious difference and we may say that we are happily agreed that there shall be two provinces.

The Public Lands.

The next question to which we come is the question as to what shall be done with the Dominion lands. My hon. friend, (Mr. R. L. Borden) in the small portion of his speech in which he did not deal with the constitutional question, devoted himself to the question of the Dominion lands. We have provided in this Bill that the Dominion lands shall be retained by the Dominion. My hon. friend takes very strong ground in favour of these lands being given over to the provinces. He argues that inasmuch as by the British North America Act the lands were left to the possession of the original provinces we should apply the same principle and leave these lands to the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. That argument is by no means conclusive. We know that there are strong reasons why these lands should be retained within the control of the Dominion. We have not the slightest doubt that during the development of the Northwest Territories it is a wise provision that the Dominion and not the provinces should retain the management and control of the public lands. My hon. friend can see no reason why a distinction should be made between our dealing with the land question in the Northwest Territories and our dealing with the land question in the case of the older provinces. Let me say to my hon. friend that we think there are

strong reasons. The question of immigration is one which is properly assigned to the Dominion government. The question of immigration and the question of the settlement of the public lands are closely associated. In most of the older provinces, the amount of available land is not very great; at all events the land which is likely to attract settlers immediately is not very great—not so great as it is in the far west. Then, if we expect population to flow rapidly into the west, if we are to control the immigration policy, if we are to carry out that vigorous policy which during the past few years has been converting that land into a busy hive of industry in many sections, if I say, we are to be able to carry on that vigorous policy which has built up the Northwest Territories in the last eight years, it is necessary that there shall be a retention of those lands in the hands of the Dominion government. But, if we make a mistake at this point we at all events have the comfort of knowing that we err in good company.

Strong Precedent For Action Respecting Lands.

My hon. friend did not note the fact that when the province of Manitoba was created, just as we are today creating these two provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the land question was considered and that for the very reasons which I have ventured to advance tonight the government of Sir John Macdonald decided that it would not be wise to give the province of Manitoba control of its own lands. If for good and sufficient reasons, the same reasons as those which have been advanced by this government, it was deemed well that in the case of the province of Manitoba the lands should remain under the control of the Dominion, why is it not an equally sound argument today to say that these lands in the case of these new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan shall remain in the hands of the Dominion? But that did not settle the question. After the lapse of some years the province of Manitoba revived the question. The Government of Manitoba advanced the very reasons which my hon. friend has advanced in favour of having control of these lands. They were not content to rest under the constitution which had been given to them. They came to Ottawa and they asked the government at Ottawa on more than one occasion if I am not mistaken, to change that provision of the constitution and give the province of Manitoba control of the lands. I have in my hand the decision of the government of Sir John Macdonald in the usual form of a certified copy of the report of a committee of the honorable the Privy Council, approved by His Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 22nd May, 1884. The memorandum says:

Sir John Macdonald on Northwest Lands.
The Committee of the Privy Council have named a sub-committee to confer

with Hon. Messrs. Murray, Norquay and Miller, duly accredited delegates from the legislature of Manitoba, upon the subjects embraced in the memorandum of instructions given by the said legislature of Manitoba to the delegates, as well as many other matters affecting the province.

The report deals with a number of matters. It is quite lengthy and I shall only be justified in detaining the House with the part of it which comes immediately in connection with the land question. After hearing these delegates, after hearing the very strongest arguments that could possibly be advanced, no doubt the very same arguments that my hon. friend has advanced today; why these lands should be placed under the control of the province, the government of Sir John Macdonald came to the following conclusion:

The lands of Manitoba hold a very different position in relation to the Dominion government from the lands of the other old provinces, the government formed from that union purchased at a large price in cash, all the rights, title and interest of the Hudson Bay Company, in and to the territory out of which the province of Manitoba has been formed.

It incurred further a very large expenditure to obtain and hold this territory in peaceable possession, and at a still further cost which is continuous and perpetual in extinguishing Indian titles and maintaining the Indians, so that the Dominion government has a very large pecuniary interest in the soil, which does not exist in respect to any other of the confederated provinces.

The purpose expressed in the memorandum of instructions—

That is in the memorandum of the Manitoba government—

—for which lands are sought, is that they may be applied to the public uses of Manitoba.

This purpose seems to be most fully met by the Federal government already, viz.: in providing railway communication to and through Manitoba, in aiding the settlement of vacant lands, and in public works of utility to the province.

Further on the same report says:

The great attraction which the Canadian government now offers, the impressive fact to the mind of the men contemplating immigration is that a well known and recognized government holds unfettered in its own hands the lands which it offers free, and that the government has its agencies and organizations for directing, receiving, transporting and placing the immigrant upon the homestead which he may select. And if the immigration operations of the Dominion, which involve so large a cost, are to have continued success and to be of advantage to Manitoba and the Northwest Territories your sub-committee

deem it to be of the utmost importance that the Dominion government shall retain and control the lands which it has proclaimed free to all comers. Were there other considerations of sufficient force to induce them to recommend their transfer to Manitoba, and as a consequence and by precedent the surrender to the provinces to be created from the Northwest Territories, all the lands within their boundaries then they would advise that the provinces holding the lands should conduct their own immigration operations at their own expense.

And so against the contention of my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) to-day that it is a wise policy to surrender these lands to the local authorities we have the deliberate conclusion of the Dominion government of earlier days, the government of that distinguished statesman, whose name is always so warmly honoured by hon. gentlemen on the other side, we have the decision of Sir John Macdonald at the time of the creation of the province of Manitoba and afterwards when the question was revived by the provincial government, we have the decision of that eminent statesman that in the true interests of this Dominion the lands of Manitoba and the Northwest should remain under the control of the Dominion government.

Financial Arrangements.

Next, Sir, we may come briefly to the question of the financial arrangements. At the time of confederation it was agreed that the various provinces which form the union should surrender their customs and excise duties to the common treasury at Ottawa. But they required as a condition of confederation that some portion of these moneys should be returned to the provinces to assist in the maintenance of the provincial government, and thus there was established the system of provincial subsidies. The principles governing the distribution of money to the provinces are pretty well laid down. As the first step we give a certain fixed sum, having due regard to the responsibilities of the various provinces, in the way of allowance for government. Then there is a sum of 80 cents per head on the population, and finally there is an adjustment of the debt account whereby in some cases an allowance is made to the province in the form of interest on a public debt which that province might owe but which in the particular case does not happen to exist. So far the principles under which these subsidies and aids to provinces may be granted are pretty well understood, and they are applied in this case to the new provinces to be created, taking an estimated population which is probably a fair and liberal one upon which they shall receive the sums set down in the Bill.

One other financial question remains and it is one which arises out of the retention of the lands by the Dominion government.

Since we have allowed the other provinces to retain the lands, and since they have them as a source of revenue, and since in the case of the Northwest Provinces we withhold the lands from them and they are deprived of that source of revenue, it follows that we must make some allowance to them, and it will be admitted that we should make a reasonable and generous allowance. I have seen comparisons made in criticism of this measure between the sums which will be received by these provinces in the west from the Dominion treasury and the sums which are received by some of the other provinces. I have seen a comparison made in the case of my own province particularly.

Comparisons With Other Provinces.

Comparisons of that nature are very unfair and may easily be misleading. If I turn to the latest returns which I have at hand, I find that in the case of Ontario the province receives about \$1,500,000 a year of revenue from its lands. The Northwest Provinces will receive nothing to correspond with that and therefore we must make a liberal allowance to them. Quebec receives about \$1,300,000 per annum, according to a recent report, in the way of revenue from lands, forests and minerals. My own province, Nova Scotia, received last year over \$600,000 from its lands, mines and minerals. We deprive the new provinces in the west of these sources of revenue, and of course we should make up the sum to them by liberal allowances. I do not think that, on the whole, we can complain much of the financial terms. It may be that when we come to deal with the Bill in committee some questions may arise that may require further consideration, but speaking generally I think the most that can be said about the financial terms is that they are liberal—and I am sure that on both sides of the House we would desire to be liberal as respects these two provinces begin with a comparatively sparse population. We all realize that a population scattered over a wide territory requires man for man more money for the expenses of government than a population which is closely settled together. I think therefore on the whole, reserving any discussion of details until we go into committee on the Bill, that the terms are liberal to these two provinces, they are generous, but not more generous than hon. gentlemen on both sides would desire we should make them.

The School Question.

But I know that all these questions, important though they may be, are overshadowed in the public mind by this great question of education. I believe that today most of the people of Canada are not thinking very much about the financial terms, the lands or anything of that sort, but they are very much disturbed in many quarters in consequence of reports that have gone abroad as to the nature and effect of the

resolutions proposed in relation to the public schools. Now this belongs to a class of questions that at any time should be approached with all possible deliberation, especially in a country like Canada, with our diversity of race and creed. He would be a rash man who would plunge into a discussion of this question without a disposition to be considerate with regard not only to the opinions and convictions, but possibly even to the prejudices of his fellow men. It is in that spirit that we should approach the question and should be prepared to listen to all that may be said and to make an honest effort to meet the views of those who differ from us in opinion. We should aim as far as possible, each of us, to have a system brought about which would come as nearly as possible to our own particular views, but surely each of us must realize that if we are to carry on the government of the country, we must not insist on our individual views but must try to meet the views of those who may differ from us, must try to find common ground of action.

Common Schools vs. Separate Schools.

For myself I do not like the principle of separate schools. I regret that such a large number of my fellow citizens in Canada are obliged to take the view, conscientiously as they say and as I believe, that they cannot support a system of free common schools. I think it would be a great thing for our country if in the growth that is now coming so rapidly upon us, our children of all races and sections and creeds should meet from day to day and mingle together in work and in play in the school room and on the play-ground, and if we could happily agree upon such a policy it would do much for the grander upbuilding of the country of which we are so proud. I say unhesitatingly that were I to have my own way, only, if one could afford to insist that his opinion must prevail regardless of the wishes of his brethren, I would like to see a school law, which did not call for this word 'separate.' But we must take things as they are.

Majority and Minority.

We have to recognize the fact that forty-one per cent of the people of this Dominion do not think as the majority of Protestants think. What then? Shall we say that these are in the minority and that therefore we will be indifferent to them? Shall we say that they are forty-one per cent and we are fifty-nine per cent and therefore, we will be indifferent to them? No, Mr. Speaker, you cannot govern Canada by any such rule as that. Let us remember that the Roman Catholics are not in a minority everywhere; there is one great province in which our Roman Catholic brethren are in the majority, overwhelmingly in the majority.

Protestant Minority in Quebec.

Suppose we are to insist upon this doctrine of provincial rights right down to the last point as was argued tonight, what would be the condition of our Protestant brethren in the Province of Quebec? Suppose that under the sacred name of provincial rights an effort were made to do away with the separate school system and with the rights of the minority in the province of Quebec what would we find? We would find the table of this House and the table of the greater parliament at Westminster—because the law would have to pass the imperial parliament—we would find the table of this parliament and the table of the imperial parliament loaded down with petitions, not of the character of so many that come to us now insisting upon the doctrine of provincial rights, but with petitions demanding that the majority should not have the right to control—demanding that the rights of the Protestant minority in the Province of Quebec should prevail instead of the wish of the majority. Let us not forget, as my hon. friend the Prime Minister has shown that in preparing the constitution of confederation the strongest advocates of separate schools were the representatives of the Protestant minority in Quebec. And, Sir, if it was necessary then to make an arrangement to protect the minority in that province, is it a dreadful thing that the minority elsewhere may ask to receive consideration? I venture to say that in the minds of the Protestants of Quebec that thought will sink deep to-day and that they will be influenced by the Golden Rule: 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.'

Lines of Thought on Public Education.

There are three great lines of thought to-day on the question of public education. One, held by a great many people, is that the secular system of education is the only system which we should have in the public schools. There are many people altogether Protestants. I think, who claim that it is useless to introduce anything like religion into the schools and that all we can do is to devote ourselves to secular education. The second line of thought is that which is held by a large number of the advocates of what may be called national schools. These people think that with secular education you may be properly called religious instruction, that you may be able to say to the teacher: Thou shalt not teach the 'isms' of any denomination but you may and you should—in the words of the Nova Scotia's school law.

—inculcate by precept and by example a respect for religion and the principles of Christianity, morality, and the highest regard for truth, justice, love of country,

loyalty, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, temperance, and all other virtues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if under a system of public schools the teacher will by precept and example inculcate those virtues, I do not know whether all will call it religion, but in my view the pupils of those schools will receive a very considerable amount of the very best of religion. However, that may be, many think that it is quite possible to associate with secular instruction a certain amount of instruction—you may call it moral instruction if you like or you may call it religious instruction—and an effort is made in some provinces of the Dominion to do that. The citation I have made is from Nova Scotia school law and I think it will be found to be substantially the same in the law and regulations of the other maritime provinces.

Then we come to the third line of thought. It is that which is held by our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens; it is also held by many Protestants, and it is: that you cannot have education and religion separated. A great writer has expressed the thought in this sentence:

So natural is the union between religion and education that you may justly assume neither is where both are not.

Religious Instruction in Schools.

Our Roman Catholic brethren attach more importance than our Protestant friends as a rule do (though many Protestants agree with them) to this question of religious education. They say that that with them it is a matter of conscience; they say they must have their children taught by persons of their own faith who can give instruction in their creed, and they would be very much pleased if we would adopt their views. They say—and who shall contend that there is not much truth in their assertion—they say that you cannot rely upon children receiving proper religious instruction in the home. I fear there is something in that statement; a little more to-day than there was in the good old times. Who shall say that to-day religious instruction receives as much attention in the homes of Canada as it did in the days of our grand parents? We are living in a very rapid age, and I am afraid there is some room for the contention of our Roman Catholic brethren that religion will not be taught to the children of Canada unless the foundation of it is given to them in the schools. We who form the Protestant majority may not be able to agree with them on that point, but it is not because we object to religious instruction; most of us think, would be pleased that our children should receive some measure of religious instruction in the schools; but the trouble is that

you cannot unite the people of any community in an agreement as to what is religion. Religion to many is creed and dogma, and inasmuch as it is not possible to bring the people of a community to a common line of thought and action on that subject, we who form the Protestant majority say that we see difficulty in teaching any special form of religion in the schools. But while we may not agree with our Roman Catholic brethren on that question, we, I think, can agree that their view of the matter—that is as to the need of religious instruction in the schools—is entitled to our profound respect, and that it is held to-day, not by Roman Catholics only, but to a very large extent also by Protestants.

Is Parliament Free To Act?

It is argued by some persons that we cannot make any change in the conditions with respect to these Northwest Territories. I am not referring to anything particularly said in this House. My right hon. friend the First Minister has not declared that it is not within the power of this parliament to make a change. He has not declared that there is any legal or binding obligation resting on the parliament of Canada to re-enact the clauses of the Act of 1875.

Mr. SPROULE. I think the First Minister expressly claimed that it was binding.

Mr. FIELDING. The point of difference is this. The First Minister does not, as I understand it, deny the absolute right and freedom of every member of this parliament to vote on this question as his conscience and intelligence shall direct him. I, at all events, take that view, and that is what I understand to be the view of my right hon. friend, but what my right hon. friend does say is that if you read the whole history of the question, you will come to the conclusion that though, as a matter of law, there may be no binding obligation—though in that sense you may not be able to produce a written contract, signed, sealed and delivered, as my hon. friend the leader of the opposition demanded a few moments ago—there may arise out of the whole history of this matter an obligation which the parliament of Canada should consider, and which many men regard as a moral obligation which this House should fulfil.

Mr. SPROULE. The right hon. the First Minister went much further than to speak of it as a moral obligation, because he used the expression that the constitution provides that we must do it.

Spirit of the Constitution.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not think he said that the constitution provides that we must

do it. I do not think my right hon. colleague is aware of any method by which any member of this parliament can be compelled to vote in any other way than as his intelligence and conscience dictates. But what I understood him to say is that the spirit of the constitution created an obligation, and there he will be supported by very many men on both sides of the House. For the purpose of record let me read the section in the Act of 1875—section 11, chapter 49, Act 1875:

When and so soon as any system of taxation shall be adopted in any district or portion of the Northwest Territories, the lieutenant governor, by and with the consent of the council or assembly as the case may be, shall pass all necessary ordinances in respect to education; but it shall therein be always provided, that a majority of the ratepayers of any district or portion of the Northwest Territories, or any lesser portion or sub-division thereof, by whatever name the same may be known, may establish such schools therein as they may think fit, and make the necessary assessment and collection of rates therefor; and further, that the minority of the ratepayers therein, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, may establish separate schools therein, and that, in such latter case, the Roman Catholic separate schools shall be liable only to assessments of such rates as they may impose upon themselves in respect thereof.

Were the Concessions Temporary Or Permanent?

That is the clause in the Act of 1875, and with the change of a few words, which in no way disturbs its substance, that is the clause we find to-day in the Northwest Territories Act. It is curious, in view of the wide discussion and agitation which is taking place to-day, that when this Act of 1875 was passed there was practically no discussion of it in this House. There was certainly no adverse discussion. It is remarkable that the parliament of Canada passed that clause and put it upon the statute-book by a unanimous vote of the House of Commons. Again I say I do not for a moment contend, and I do not understand that my right hon. friend contended, that, as a matter of constitutional right fixed by the words of the statute, we are obliged to re-enact that clause. I go further. I do not hesitate to say that in my view, at any time since 1875, it was within the power—I do not say the moral right—but undoubtedly within the power of this parliament to repeal the Act of 1875. Therefore, I am not claiming that there is any binding legal obligation, but I do say that we are obliged to look carefully into the

circumstances under which that Act was passed; and if we find that at the time it was regarded by its friends and supporters, and parliament generally, as an Act which was passed not only for the present but also for the future, that creates a moral obligation which the House may well take into consideration. The Bill was introduced in 1875 and carried with practically no opposition. It is worth remembering that the government of the late Mr. Mackenzie was then in power. The Bill, as first introduced, did not contain any provision respecting education. Attention was drawn to that omission, and a provision was made a little later.

Views of Mr. Blake.

The chief speaker on that occasion was the Hon. Edward Blake—a very eminent member of this parliament, a very able constitutional lawyer, and a gentleman whose Protestantism, I believe, is beyond question. Mr. Blake, speaking on that Bill, said:

The task which the ministry had set for itself was the most important it was possible to conceive. To found primary institutions under which we hope to see hundreds of thousands, and the more sanguine of us think, millions of men and families settled and flourishing, was one of the noblest undertakings that could be entered upon by any legislative body, and it was no small indication of the power and true position of this Dominion that parliament should be engaged to-day in that important task. He agreed with the hon. member for Kingston (Sir John A. Macdonald) that the task was one that required time, consideration and deliberation, and they must take care that no false steps were made in such a work. He did not agree with that right hon. gentleman that the government ought to repeat his errors. The right hon. gentleman had tried the institutions for the Northwest Territories which he now asked the House to frame, and for the same reason as he had given to-day—that it would be better for the Dominion government to keep matters in their own hand and decide what was best for the future. He (Mr. Blake) believed that it was essential to our obtaining a large immigration to the Northwest that we should tell the people before hand what their rights were to be in the country in which we invited them to settle.

He regarded it as essential, under the circumstances of the country, and in view of the deliberation during the last few days, that a general principle should be laid down in the Bill with respect to public instruction. He did believe that we ought not to introduce into that territory the heartburning and difficulties with

which certain other portions of the Dominion and other countries had been afflicted. It seemed to him, having regard to the fact that, as far as we could expect at present, the general character of that population would be somewhat analogous to the population of Ontario, that there should be some provision in the constitution by which they should have conferred upon them the same rights and privileges in regard to religious instruction as those possessed by the people of the province of Ontario. The principles of local self-government and the settling of the question of public instruction seemed to him ought to be the cardinal principles of the measure.

Is it not evident that at that time, in advancing that view as to the necessity of settling the education question, Mr. Blake had the idea that it should be settled, not for that day only, not as a temporary matter, but settled then and for ever?

Testimony of Mr. Scott.

Other members spoke at that time. I find that, in this House, as I have stated, there was no objection—the Bill passed without any division. The Bill went to the Senate, and was discussed there by several gentlemen, among others by Hon. Mr. Scott, then, as now, Secretary of State, who was in charge of the Bill. Whatever he said might fairly be assumed to express the view of the government of the day, the view of Mr. Alexander Mackenzie and his colleagues. Mr. Scott in the course of the discussion said:—

Any gentleman would have to admit that it was the greatest possible relief to the people of Ontario that this question was settled for them, and was not, as in some of the other provinces, a source of constant discord. He was one of those who maintained that parents had a right to educate their children as they pleased, and that they ought not to be taxed to maintain schools to which they could not conscientiously send their children. Our whole system of government was based upon that sound principle, and how long could we have happiness and peace in this country if we were to abolish that safeguard, which was now recognized in both the large provinces? Would not every gentleman in this chamber gladly see the New Brunswick trouble removed? Now was the proper time to establish in the new territory a principle that ought years ago to have been established in this Dominion.

We may not feel called upon to agree with Mr. Scott as to how widely that principle ought to have been established in former years, but surely we cannot read

the remarks he made on behalf of the government of Mr. Mackenzie without reaching the conclusion that what they meant to do was to establish the system of separate schools, not for the moment, not for a short period, but as a part of the government of that country for all future time. Mr. Scott is a lawyer but I do not present his views as part of a legal argument; I quote these words simply to show that Mr. Scott, representing the government of the day, judged by the language he used, must have contemplated that the clause which they then adopted was intended, even though we might have the power to repeal it, to continue in force for ever in the Northwest Territories.

Sir Alexander Campbell's Words, "Establish and Perpetuate."

Then I find also that the distinguished leader of the Conservative opposition in the Senate at that time, Sir Alexander Campbell, also discussed the question. Sir Alexander Campbell was a lawyer, and for a time was a Minister of Justice. He referred to an amendment which had been moved by Mr. Aikins, to strike out the separate school clause, and this is what he said:

It would be much to be regretted if the amendment passed. The object of the Bill was to establish and perpetuate in the Northwest Territories the same system as prevailed in Ontario and Quebec, and which had worked so well in the interest of peace and harmony with the different populations of these provinces. He thought the fairer course, and the better one, for all races and creeds, was to adopt the suggestion of the government and enable the people to establish separate schools in the territory, and thus prevent the introduction of evils, from which Ontario and Quebec had suffered, but had judiciously rid themselves.

Is it possible to attach to that language any other meaning than that Sir Alexander Campbell desired to settle this troublesome question by adopting the separate school clause then and for all future time? Is it conceivable that he meant: We will settle this question up to a certain day and then we will throw the door open to discord and strife? His language cannot be subject to such interpretation. What could be stronger than these words: 'To establish and perpetuate in the Northwest Territories the same system as prevailed in Ontario and Quebec.' Not only to establish but to 'perpetuate.' Did that mean a temporary arrangement? Surely, if the English language means anything, Sir Alexander Campbell meant when he spoke that day that the Bill he was supporting, though leader of the opposition, was meant to establish and perpetuate in some way

a system of separate schools in the Northwest Territories.

George Brown's Views.

Then the Hon. George Brown spoke. Reference has already been made to his part in the debate; but the words he used may be quoted again. In the course of the discussion he supported the amendment that was moved by Mr. Aikins to strike out the separate school clause and he used these words:

The moment this Act passed and the Northwest became part of the union, they came under the Union Act and under the provisions with regard to separate schools.

Mr. Brown was not a lawyer. I am not quoting his words as expressing an opinion which is worthy of any consideration as part of a constitutional argument; I am speaking entirely with a view to establishing the intention that existed in the minds of the men who passed the legislation—the government who proposed it and the men in the opposition who supported it. There is one sentence in the speech of Hon. Edward Blake in this House that I would like to repeat:

He (Mr. Blake) believed that it was essential to our obtaining a large immigration to the Northwest Territories that we should tell the people beforehand what their rights were to be in the country to which they were invited.

The Question of Immigration.

I have no doubt, from information that has reached me, that many immigrants have come into the Northwest Territories upon representations that the schools there would be conducted in accordance with their religious views. I believe this to be correct. I may mention a little incident bearing on that point. I had occasion recently to come into official contact with the representative of one of the continental nations. I was discussing with him the question of immigration—we wished to have immigrants come to Canada from his country. In the course of our conversation he said: If you are to get immigrants from our country, this school question that is coming up becomes one of very great importance to us. I have no doubt therefore that it can be shown that some of the immigrants who have come to the Northwest Territories have come—for we have many Roman Catholic settlers in that country—on the faith of representations that their schools were to be conducted in accordance with the views of the Roman Catholic minority.

Dalton McCarthy's Evidence.

I find that not only is there the evidence I have referred to, showing the intention

at the time this Act was passed, but later on there were further discussions which may be cited in the same direction. Some years afterwards, in 1894, there was a discussion in this House with regard to some amendments of the Northwest Act that were proposed. I find that the late Mr. Dalton McCarthy, who desired that the separate school clause should be repealed, who was an opponent of separate schools as hon. gentlemen well remember, in a speech at that time laid down the principle that if you should continue to allow that separate school clause to remain on the statute-book—if you should go on year after year allowing the Northwest people to possess this system of separate schools up to the moment at which they would be brought in as a province, then they would be in a position to come to us and say: It is too late for you to change that system; you must now give us a continuation of it. Now, Mr. McCarthy, of course, was desirous that the system should be changed, but in the meantime he did not shrink from the responsibility of saying that if the parliament of Canada desired to change it, it must act quickly, and not wait until the time arrived for the creation of the provinces. I find the extract from Mr. McCarthy in 'Hansard' of 1904, page 6085:

Now we insist by the clause of the Act of 1875, which has been included in the various consolidations of the legislative powers of the Northwest Territories which have been made from time to time that they shall have separate schools; and if we continue insisting that that system shall prevail up to the time we create provinces in the Northwest, then the application of this clause of the first subsection of section 93 of the British North America Act to which I have referred, rivets for all time upon the new provinces the system of separate schools. Create a province there now, enact the usual clauses of the British North America Act, and the result will be that in the new province those who have enjoyed what is spoken of as a right or privilege with respect to denominational schools, would be able to say: The constitution given to this province by the Dominion parliament does not permit any interference with any right or privilege which we enjoyed prior to the time of the creation of this province. That I think is a most important consideration.

Mr. McCarthy, it will be observed, as an opponent of the system of separate schools, took the ground that if the parliament of Canada wished to destroy that system it must not wait until it undertook to create a province. His argument is that if you leave these Northwest people in possession of the separate school sys-

tem, if you go on year after year permitting it, encouraging it; if you allow them to pass ordinances in accordance with it, if you have these ordinances sent to Ottawa year after year, and you approve of them and allow them to go into operation, then you are confirming the system of separate schools to those provinces; and when the moment shall arrive that these lands shall pass from the status of territories into the larger status of provinces, it will then be too late for you to come in and say we will deprive you of this system of separate schools. Mr. McCarthy and Sir John Thompson had some little discussion, and the former again emphasized his views on that subject.

I am very glad the right hon. gentleman—

Referring to Sir John Thompson—

—has explained it in that way, and perhaps I was wrong in my understanding of his remarks. Of course, it is an important declaration from the First Minister.

That was the declaration which Sir John Thompson made, and which was quoted by the leader of the opposition today, in which he said that the parliament of Canada would be free to give to the provinces of the Northwest such a constitution as it might see fit. Mr. McCarthy was answering that declaration, and he went on to add:

Now the House will have to use its own judgment on this question. What I say is this. That if this question of separate schools is to remain in its present position until we grant provincial autonomy to any portion of the Northwest, it will be practically impossible, unless there is an enormous change in public opinion, to deny them what every other province that has joined the confederation has been entitled to, what Manitoba was entitled to, and what I submit under the circumstances every province would be entitled to. Now, let me draw attention to the constitution conferred upon Manitoba in that regard. I have not got it under my hand, but it will be found on consulting it that when we conferred autonomy upon the province of Manitoba, we did it by reference to the British North America Act. What we declared was that where not otherwise provided for in the Act, all the provisions of the British North America Act should apply to the province of Manitoba, and I think the very same words were contained in the resolutions which were passed at the time British Columbia and the Province of Prince Edward Island came into the union. So that we have got that precedent before us; that was the promise upon which we admitted

Manitoba, and looking at the character of the legislation, I do not think that there can be any doubt that the same rule must apply when we come to admit the provinces to be created out of the Northwest Territories.

Sir John Thompson.

My hon. friend, in quoting to-day from Sir John Thompson, almost gave me the impression—he will probably say that he certainly did not so intend—that Sir John Thompson had expressed no opinion favourable to the continuance of separate schools in the Northwest Territories. Sir John Thompson, in answer to Mr. McCarthy did state that the parliament of Canada could give to the Northwest Territories such a constitution as it might see fit, but in doing so Sir John Thompson used words which unmistakably show that in his mind that moral obligation would exist. Sir John said:

What the constitution of the future provinces shall be, in view of the pledges which have been referred to, or in view of any other set of circumstances, will be for parliament to decide when it decides to create those provinces.

Sir John Thompson recognized as a lawyer the power of the parliament of Canada to give to the new provinces such constitution as parliament might see fit, but in doing so he carefully inserted the words:

What the constitution of the future provinces shall be, in view of the pledges which have been referred to.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Could the hon. gentleman state what were the pledges he referred to?

Mr. FIELDING. I take it he referred to the general legislation as to separate schools in the Northwest. That is what I take it to mean. Again I quote from Sir John Thompson in the same debate. I will quote a clause which my hon. friend read to-day, but I want to quote it in an enlarged form:

We claim therefore that the constitutional system which was established with regard to schools and with regard to language in 1875 ought to be maintained for the same reasons as those which dictated its creation, and that this condition of affairs should last, at least, while the affairs of the Territories are under the control of this parliament.

That language seems to imply that the matter might be further considered when they ceased to be territories. Then he goes on to say what I just read previously:

What the constitution of the future provinces shall be, in view of the pledges which have been referred, or in view of any other set of circumstances, will be for parliament to decide when it decides to create those provinces. I hope therefore that the House will be careful to-day not to disturb the arrangement so wisely made in 1875, and which is as useful in the Territories now as it was then.

Now, can anybody point out wherein there will be a difference in the educational needs of the Northwest on the 1st day of July, 1905, as compared with the conditions on the 30th June in the same year? You will have passed from the status of a territory to the status of a province; but will that in the slightest degree alter the needs or conditions of the Northwest with respect to education? If the schools which they have are working happily and satisfactorily on the 30th day of June in this year 1905, what reason will there be for making any change in the legislation on the 1st day of July following? Aside from the constitutional question, surely we have to admit there is the practical question of the needs of the people of the Northwest Territories; and in that respect they will not be different on the morning of the first day of July from their needs on the morning of the 30th day of June. A clause of that kind, Sir John Thompson said, is as useful to the Territories to-day as it was in 1875; and surely the same words may be repeated and we may say that this clause and the conditions which the clause has created will be just as useful to the people of the Northwest Territories on the first day of July as they will be on the 30th day of June.

The Manitoba Case.

Now, I have not been discussing the constitutional question as my hon. friend will observe. I have been discussing entirely what I may call the practical side of the question, and I do that with the firm conviction that most of the people of this country will not bother themselves very much about this constitutional question but they will want to get at the actual facts of this very important subject. We are proposing by this legislation to confirm certain Acts of the Northwest Territories. We are proposing to continue certain legislation to continue for a further time and for ever the school system which now exists. We are met with the statement that the position of the Liberal party in that respect is different to-day from the position which is held in the case of Manitoba. We have heard that from the hon. leader of the opposition to-day. I think it will have to be admitted, after a careful examination of the situation that the conditions in respect to the Northwest Territories are

widely and entirely different from the conditions that existed in connection with the proposed legislation for the province of Manitoba. It was proposed by the Remedial Bill of 1896 to override an Act of the legislature of Manitoba, passed by the voice of the people of that province, and, as subsequently was maintained, entirely within the legislative authority of that province.

No Coercion Here.

We do not propose to override any Act of any legislature. What we propose to-day is to confirm and continue for all future time a measure which the free voice of the Northwest legislature has placed upon the statute-book of the Territories. So that, on that point, there is a wide difference between the condition of affairs in respect to Manitoba and the condition of affairs in respect to the Northwest Territories. Then again it was said and with some justice that an effort was made to coerce the province of Manitoba, because it was proposed to pass an Act against which the government of Manitoba entered a solemn protest. There is no protest from the government of the Northwest Territories against this measure. I make that statement advisedly. The Premier of the Northwest Territories, an estimable gentleman who has been taking part in this discussion, as properly he should, has written a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, but I am informed and believe that that letter expresses his individual opinion and it is not authorized by the government of the Northwest Territories. So, in the case of Manitoba I repeat that the proposition was to do something against which the government of the Northwest Territories have entered no protest whatever. Then there is a further consideration.

Northwest Representatives.

I suppose the people in the Northwest Territories have the best right to speak through their acknowledged representatives. I have no right to say what will be the views expressed by my hon. friends from the Northwest Territories on the other side of the House, but it is understood—I do not state it from direct communication with my hon. friends from the Northwest Territories—but it is understood and believed that this legislation is accepted and will be supported by seven out of ten members from the Northwest. Well, if there is no great matter of principle involved in this measure, and if seven out of ten representatives of the members from the Northwest Territories are satisfied that this is a good law for the people, who would dare to say that we are coercing the people of the

Northwest Territories? I would say, Sir, that any argument which is designed to prove that we are dealing in this matter in the way of coercion is entirely unjustifiable.

What Is the Proposed School Law?

What is this law which we are going to confirm, to ratify and to continue in the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan? We are told that this provides for a system of separate schools. Well, a system of separate schools may mean one thing in one quarter and another thing in another quarter. It is, in a measure, a system of separate schools. That expression in the minds of many people means a great deal. I do not think I am mistaken when I say that in the minds of a great many Protestant people in the country when you talk about separate schools they immediately understand that you are talking about schools that come under the control of some religious body and particularly schools which come under the control of the Roman Catholic church. That is the common idea in many quarters said as respects other countries or other provinces it would be utterly mistaken to say that we are giving to the Northwest Territories separate schools in that sense of the word.

National Schools in the Northwest.

I am going to submit to this House that the system of separate schools which we have to-day in the Northwest Territories is a national school system, and if it has all the elements of a national school system then I say there is no principle involved in this discussion which would justify us in having a quarrel over it. What is this system? One would suppose from the frequent references that are made to it that it is some iniquitous system; something which if continued would prejudice the interests of the people in these Territories for all time to come. The system of schools which prevails to-day in the Northwest Territories exists by virtue of chapters 29, 30 and 31 of the ordinances of the Northwest Territories. So far as the principle of separate schools is concerned, of course, that principle was to be found in the Act of 1875 and the ordinances adapted themselves to it. But if you read these three ordinances of the Northwest Territories you will rise from the perusal of them with the conviction that in that country they have a system of national schools which may well challenge the admiration of the people in other portions of this country. What then are the essential elements of national schools? I take it for granted that if you have a school which is established by the public authorities, if the management of the school derives all its authority

and privileges from a regulation of the government of the state, if you have a system of schools under which the proper authorities of the state, or the province, or the territory as the case may be, themselves specify the school books, establish the course of study, provide for the inspection of the schools and for the distribution of the money, if you have all those elements, then, I say you have a system of state created, state-managed and state supported public schools. Every one of these conditions exist to-day in the public school system of the Northwest Territories.

Provincial Control of the Territories.

A member of the government of the Territories becomes commissioner of education and the powers of the commissioner are set forth in detail. I shall only read the clause under the heading of 'Regulations of the Department.' These regulations are to be made by the commissioner himself, a member of the government, with the approval of the Governor in Council. Section 6 of chapter 20, says:

The commissioner, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, shall have power:

1. To make regulations of the department—

(a) For the classification; organization, government, examination and inspection of all schools hereinafter mentioned;

(b) For the construction, furnishing and care of school buildings and the arrangement of school premises;

(c) For the examination, licensing and grading of teachers and for the examination of persons who may desire to enter professions or who may wish certificates of having completed courses of study in any school;

(d) For a teacher's reading course and teachers' institutes and conventions;

2. To authorize text and reference books for the use of the pupils and teachers in all schools hereinbefore mentioned as well as such maps, globes, charts and other apparatus or equipment as may be required for giving proper instruction in such schools;

3. To prepare a list of books suitable for libraries and to make regulations for the management of such libraries.

4. To make due provision for the training of teachers.

What Objection Can Be Taken?

What is there, Sir, in all this to which anybody can take exception? These details

constitute the essential elements of a national school system. That system prevails to-day in the Northwest Territories, and that system we propose to continue by the legislation which we have presented in this House. Well, there is still a shadow of difference. The difference between a minority school and a majority school in the Northwest Territories is so exceedingly small that he who would attempt to make a definition of it would find himself in difficulty. The difference is with respect to one half hour's instruction in religious matters at the close of the school. The school laws of the Northwest Territories provide for religious instruction, not as a matter of obligation, but they empower the trustees to authorize religious instruction within certain limits. That authority for religious instruction is not confined to separate schools, it applies to all schools in the Territories.

The Half Hour Difference.

It is provided that wherever the trustees so wish, wherever the local conditions permit, there shall be religious instruction in all schools in the Northwest Territories, not in the minority schools only. Then there is a further provision that all schools may be opened with the reciting of the Lord's Prayer. Does anybody object to that? I hope not. I trust that in any case where the trustees of a school authorize that, it is not objectionable. But then there is this half hour of religious education. From the hour at which these schools open in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon they are absolutely alike; there is no difference; the teachers have the same duties, the same qualifications; the same examinations, the same course of study, the same books are prescribed by the government, the regulations are made by the government. I repeat that from the hour of opening in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon there is no shade of difference in all these schools in the Northwest Territories. So it has come to this, that we have a shade of difference as respects the half hour of religious instruction, from 3.30 to 4 o'clock. I submit, Mr. Speaker, to this House that on a question like this that half hour of religious instruction is not a shade should not be a cause of conflict. Where the majority of the people and the trustees are of the Protestant faith, that half hour of religious instruction will, of course, take the form of the faith of the majority; it will be Protestant religious instruction. Where the majority of the people and the trustees are Roman Catholics, that half hour of religious instruction will follow the faith of the Roman Catholic majority. In each of these cases the minority, if they wish, may have a separate school. I am firmly persuaded that the difference is so slight that if we reach a wise decision now, if we refrain from fanning the flame of political passion—I withdraw that word political, I am not discussing this from a party standpoint and

I did not intend to use that word, and I withdraw it—if we refrain from doing or saying anything which can fan the flame of religious excitement in the Northwest Territories now, my honest conviction is that the separate schools will diminish, and the free common public schools will increase. I am persuaded that the difference is so small that the mass of the people in the Northwest Territories will hardly find it to their advantage to keep it up except in a few instances. I am reminded of one point.

Even the Half Hour Instruction Not Obligatory.

I had forgotten to state that even with respect to that half hour, it is not a matter of obligation, but if the parents of any child disapprove of that religious instruction for that half hour, the child may withdraw. There is, therefore, liberty of conscience in the highest degree. I do not hesitate to say, Protestant that I am, that I do not think that half hour of religious instruction given by a Roman Catholic teacher will hurt the children—I think that half an hour of instruction given by a Catholic teacher to Catholic children—I think that we may reasonably feel that if there is enough of it to have any influence on the life of the child it will make a boy a better citizen, a better Canadian. I want the House to consider seriously. I submit the proposition again, that if it be true as I say, and I believe I am correct beyond the power of contradiction, that from the moment that the school opens in the morning up to half-past three in the afternoon there is no difference between a separate school and a free national school, and if the only point of difference between them is that half hour of religious instruction, is there enough in it to quarrel about, and to have public meetings and agitation throughout the length and breadth of this land? I believe that the great mass of the people to-day who are joining in petitions and holding meetings have not had time to understand this question. I believe that they have an erroneous view as to what the condition in the Northwest Territories is and as to what is the condition which we propose to perpetuate. When they discover, as they will, in the light of the debate which will take place in this House now and in the next few days, when the people of Canada shall learn that we have in the west to-day a system which is practically a national school system, and that is the only point of difference between us is with respect to that small matter of a half hour of religious instruction, I think the great mass of the Protestant people of Canada will say that they regret that there has been any agitation on the subject.

The Nova Scotia System—Compromise Was Necessary There.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) referred to-day

to the conditions of education in the province of Nova Scotia. We are proud to-day, Sir, of the national school system in that province. We rejoice that from time to time we hear our public men of all parties and all creeds cite the province of Nova Scotia as an example of toleration and good will. The happy conditions which exist in that province have many a time been referred to by my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, who has held the people of Nova Scotia up as examples of moderation and toleration. We have a free common national system of education in the province of Nova Scotia. The principle of that system is, as I stated at an earlier stage of my speech: Thou shalt not teach any 'ism' but thou shalt teach by precept and example the Christian virtues. This is the essential point, and happily we have got along very well. But do not make any mistake. Let no man imagine that that happy condition has been brought about without conciliation and compromise. We have no separate schools by law in Nova Scotia, but I say that we could not have brought about that happy condition if we had not been disposed to meet our Roman Catholic brethren in a generous spirit, with due regard to their religious convictions. There is no separate school system by law in the province of Nova Scotia, but I tell this House to-night that the principle of separate schools is more emphatically recognized in the province of Nova Scotia than it is to-day in the Northwest Territories.

Come with me down to the fair city of Halifax and what will you find? The Roman Catholic Archbishop builds the school and leases it to the school trustees. What would they say to that in the Northwest? The Roman Catholic authorities receive consideration and this is one of the means whereby we bring about that happy condition which obtains down there. The sister of charity teaches in our schools, wearing the garb of her order, and many of the sisters are among the best teachers in our province. There are schools in the city of Halifax which will be pointed out to you as Roman Catholic schools, and so they are. The Prime Minister once when in Halifax visited one of the schools and he alluded to it as a separate school. One of the sisters interrupted him and said: No, Sir, it is a public school of the province of Nova Scotia. And so it was, but it was a school which was recognized as a Roman Catholic school, and it was attended only by Roman Catholic pupils, and it was taught by the Roman Catholic sister of charity wearing the garb of her order and the cross upon her breast. We have made concessions to our Roman Catholic brethren in the province of Nova Scotia. Why, if a vacancy occurs in the teaching staff of one of the Catholic schools of Halifax, the Protestant commissioners have no vote in the selection of a successor; the

Catholic commissioners only have the right to vote. Such is the system in the city of Halifax and in many of the larger communities in the province, because it is only in a large community that this condition can be brought about. I am less familiar with the conditions in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, but I think I am right in saying that they are substantially the same.

Mr. EMMERSON. The same in New Brunswick.

Separate Schools in Practice in the Maritime Provinces.

Mr. FIELDING. While we have no separate schools established by law, we have in practice in all these provinces separate schools, and I hesitate not to make the statement that in my own province of Nova Scotia the principle of separate schools, is recognized more emphatically than it is recognized in the Northwest Territories to-day. I would have this parliament bear in mind that if we have that happy condition of things in that fair province, if we can be quoted from time to time as models of good citizenship and toleration and moderation, it is not because we have recognized the rights and the feelings, and even the prejudices of our Roman Catholic brethren. What interest has suffered? There was a little friction years ago but there is none to-day. The sensible people of Nova Scotia have made up their minds that this a matter which we can please our Roman Catholic brethren without hurting ourselves; and when we can do that why should we not do it? I repeat then, that that happy condition in the province of Nova Scotia which is so often referred to—which I myself have again and again spoken of with pride—has been brought about by paying due regard of the rights, the prejudices even, and the feelings of the Roman Catholic minority.

Mr. SPROULE. Does the minister think that the people of the Northwest Territories would be less liberal or less generous than the people of Nova Scotia?

Mr. FIELDING. Perhaps they would not, but if forty-one per cent of the people of Canada think that there is a danger, we might well see if some compromise, some arrangement, could not be made. We have to-day before us perhaps the most important measures that have ever engaged the attention of the parliament of Canada. They are measures which are wide-reaching in their effect. Whether we have regard to the interest, which is manifested by the people throughout the country today, or whether we have regard to the future welfare of this Dominion, which all, irrespective of party, are so anxious to advance, we must feel, I am sure, that these are great measures, and that we should approach them with the utmost care, with the utmost deliberation, with a desire to

find a happy settlement of any differences that may arise.

A Grave Situation.

Let us not conceal from ourselves certain facts; let us be frank with one another. Let us say that the gravity of this situation is even more serious than many think. If my right hon. friend the Prime Minister is to retire from office, as he would be obliged to do if this Bill were defeated, what then? Under ordinary circumstances the retirement of a minister or the retirement of a government means very little after all. The public adapt themselves to new conditions: one government goes out and another comes in. Party interest may suffer. But that is not the situation to-day. There are interests involved in this question which far outweigh any mere party consideration. What matters it if one government should go out and another come in? But think for a moment of what would happen under the present state of affairs. Some one will say: what matter if the Prime Minister goes out, somebody else will come in. Sir, no government could be formed under such circumstances which would command the confidence of this parliament. I make that statement after due deliberation. But, somebody will say: what of that; if you Liberals cannot form a government we Conservatives will take charge. Will you? I doubt it. I have no right to speak for my hon. friend the leader of the opposition but if I know him at all, I venture to remark that he would shrink from the formation of a government in which he would be obliged to draw religious lines. As a high-minded man with due regard for the future of his country, he would shrink from the formation of a government under which he would be obliged to exclude from office and vote and power forty-one per cent of the people of this Dominion. The leader of the opposition has acknowledged to-day that there is no union among his party on this question. He chaffed the Prime Minister for a moment; he said this question was not making for the unity of government. May I venture to suggest that it is not making for the unity of the opposition? The leader of the opposition acknowledged today—it was right that he should acknowledge it—that he and some of the men with whom he sits were not able to see eye to eye. He warned us that he spoke to-day for himself only and that he did not presume to speak in the name of his party. What does that show us? Does it not prove that if my right hon. friend shall be obliged to retire from office on this question, my hon. friend the leader of the opposition would shrink from the formation of a government under such conditions? The matter is too grave to permit of its being treated lightly for a single moment yet I venture to say that it will be impossible to repress a clash between both sides of the House when I

the picture that would be presented of my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Spry), Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk), Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron), and Victoria and Haliburton (Mr. Sam Hughes) sitting down to prepare a resolution with respect to separate schools.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. We could not make a much worse mess of it than the government has up to the present.

Mr. FIELDING. I think my hon. friend is entirely wrong. He will find, when the vote is taken, that we have a united government and a united party, and he will find, according to his own confession, that he will not have a united party supporting him. My hon. friend made merry at our differences a few days ago, but I suspect he has been having a few bad quarters of an hour himself. Let us not, in our momentary good nature, fail to see the gravity of the situation presented to the House. I say deliberately—and every hon. gentleman who listens to me knows it—that if this Bill be not passed, if we should be unable to carry a measure on this subject, then my right hon. friend will be obliged to retire and no other government can be formed which will command the confidence of this parliament.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Is that the reason why the Finance Minister is held back into line?

Government Would be Made Impossible.

Mr. FIELDING. The only way a government could be formed by hon. gentlemen opposite would be by the hon. member for Victoria and Haliburton (Mr. Sam Hughes) coming forward to sit cheek by jowl with the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) as an advocate for separate schools, and I do not think that my hon. friends would care for the combination. I am speaking in all seriousness. This is no matter for levity. I repeat that there is in a certain sense a crisis. There is no party crisis, but there is a crisis with regard to the administration of public affairs in Canada by any government or party. If my right hon. friend should retire on an issue like this, then the only thing that could possibly happen, if my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition should agree to form a government at such a time, would be that he must form a Protestant government, and he must have a general election.

An hon. MEMBER. Shame.

Mr. FIELDING. Who says shame?

Mr. OSLER. This is the first time that the religious question has been introduced.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Order; sit down.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not think that my hon. member for West Toronto (Mr.) has paid me the compliment of

trying to understand what I was presenting to the House. Again I repeat—and I want to guard against any misapprehension, I want to give the hon. gentleman who said 'shame' an opportunity to say it again, because I want to state the situation as it actually exists. I say this is becoming a religious question. Who denies it? My hon. friend the leader of the opposition said as much today.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I beg my hon. friend's pardon, I said nothing of the kind. If so understood, I desire to disclaim any such intention. I argued this question, as my right hon. friend the First Minister did in the first instance, on the constitutional ground because in his remarks to this House, both on the 21st February and again to-day, he put the question solely on that ground.

Mr. FIELDING. The point is not important. I understand my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition to have spoken, in the course of his speech to-day, of the religious differences which unhappily would arise in this matter. I think that will be found somewhere in 'Hansard' but it is not important, and if he says he made no allusion of the kind, I withdraw the remark. But I say that it is in the minds of a large portion of the people of Canada a religious question. I take the responsibility of saying—and every man opposite knows it—that this question to-day is largely shaping itself as a religious question. We have on the one side the Roman Catholic body, largely united, and on the other side a large portion of the Protestant body who are agitating against this Bill on what may be called religious lines. I am not discussing their motive or purpose, but the line of separation is religion, and no one can contest that. I say that inevitable if the right hon. the First Minister had to retire from office on this question and my hon. friend the leader of the opposition were called on to form a government to settle this school question in the Northwest, he could not unite the hon. member for East Grey (Mr. Sirois) and the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) and the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron): There is nothing wrong in saying that. We all know that these gentlemen have their differences on this question and could not agree. I say that the government then would have to be formed on religious lines, and that would be the greatest calamity that could occur to the Dominion of Canada.

Peace With Honor.

Surely in the presence of such a condition of things, we would all do well to see if it be not possible to find some solution of this great question. This is a time of great promise for Canada. Canada, united, happy and harmonious, will present a picture which will command the admiration and the confidence of the civilized world. Canada, in that happy condition, may hope to receive immigrants, may hope to move forward with even more rapid strides on that splendid march of progress and prosperity with which she has entered the 20th century. We have had great progress in the Northwest, but after all it is but the beginning of better and greater things.

We hear the tread of pioneers,
Of nations yet to be;
The first low wash of waves when soon
shall roll a human sea.

Let it be our happy privilege in this parliament of Canada to do all we can to continue that picture of Canada's prosperity. Let us be careful, lest by a mistaken step to-day, another picture may have to be presented, showing our people divided along religious line, our country riven and distracted by religious strife. Canada would no longer present that happy picture. The tide of immigration would be turned back, capital would take alarm, business men would lose confidence, we would no longer be able to enjoy the prosperity of the present, nor could we any longer hope for that magnificent future which to-day opens to our vision. Let us realize the danger of religious strife in this matter. Let us try to avoid it. Let us have peace in Canada if possible—not an ignoble peace, not peace at any price, but peace with honour; peace on the terms of this honourable compromise which meets the religious prejudices, as some see fit to call them, which meets the religious convictions of two and a quarter millions of our people, and yet at the same time secures to the people of the Northwest Territories now and forever every essential element of a system of national schools—peace on the terms of this modified Bill, which we submit to the House with the sincere conviction that it offers a measure which high minded and patriotic men may honourably accept, regardless of party, race, class or creed.